

- (b) if so, the details of the modernisation plan;
- (c) whether this plan includes acquisition of new fighter craft also;
- (d) if so, what is the progress of negotiations for Mirage fighters from Qatar;
- (e) the period fixed for above modernisation plan;
- (f) the details of aircraft in the inventory going to retire as a part of this modernization;
- (g) whether all the MiG variants are going to be decommissioned very soon; and
- (h) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A. K. ANTONY) : (a) to (c) and (e) Modernisation of combat aircraft and acquisition of new aircraft are on-going processes undertaken from time to time to meet the operational requirements of the Air Force. The Air Force has identified aircraft including MiG-29 and Mirage 2000, for upgrade during the 11th Plan period.

(d) Negotiations for procurement of Mirage fighters from Qatar were held but no agreement could be reached.

(f) As various aircraft complete their technical life or otherwise lose their utility, they are phased out and new aircraft inducted.

(g) No, sir.

(h) Does not arise.

Premature retirement by officers in Army and IAF

†916. SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

- (a) the year-wise details of the number of officers in Army and Air Force who have taken premature retirement during the last three years;
- (b) the number of officers who applied for premature retirement in the year 2006;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) the reasons for taking premature retirement by such a large number of officers;

(d) the extent to which shortage of officers and soldiers is being presently felt in the Army and the steps Government have taken to fill this gap; and

(e) the details of the policy of Government to allow premature retirement by the officers?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A. K. ANTONY) : (a) to (e) The year-wise data on the number of Army/Air Force officers who have taken premature retirement (PR) in the last three years (except Army Medical Corps, Army Dental Corps and Military Nursing Service) is given as under:—

Year	Army officers	Air Force officers
2004	290	244
2005	365	175
2006	464	87

The number of officers who applied for premature retirement during the year 2006 is as follows:—

Army officers	—	811
Air Force	—	220

The main reasons for taking premature retirement by the Army/Air Force officers are:—

- (a) Non empanelment for promotion
- (b) Being placed in a permanent low medical category
- (c) Compassionate reason such as to look after ailing parents/children/siblings, resolve marital discord, attend to litigation, look after ancestral property etc.

The shortage of officers in the Army as on 1.1.2007 is 11238. There is however no shortage of soldiers in the Army.

Steps being taken by the Government to attract youths to seek a career in the Army include the following:

- (i) Allowing time-bound scale promotions upto the rank of Col.
- (ii) Vigorous media campaign.
- (iii) Professional courses for second career to officers retiring at younger age.
- (iv) Undertaking the married accommodation project for overcoming the shortage of married accommodation.
- (v) Raising of two additional Services Selection Boards (SSBs) in June 2003, to enhance capacity for screening and interview of candidates at the SSBs.
- (vi) A number of 'Image Projection Campaigns' have been launched by the Recruiting Directorate to attract quality youth to join the Army. These have helped in increasing awareness amongst youth about 'Army as a Career'.
- (vii) Enhanced interaction with target audience is being undertaken, in which officers from Recruiting Directorate and teams from Command HQs visit various Universities and Colleges. Publicity CDs on Army as a Career have been prepared and projected to target audience through these teams. Moreover, NCC Units have also been incorporated to deliver motivational talks in educational institutions. As a result there has been a significant improvement in number of candidates applying for various entries in the last two years.

As per the policy of Government, requests for premature retirement by the Defence Service Officers are considered on merit of a case keeping in view the manpower situation and operational requirements of the Services. The grounds on which the requests are considered include supersession, extreme compassionate grounds, low medical category, failure to acquire prescribed technical qualifications and taking employment in private sector within a period of one year and two years in respect of public sectors before due date of normal retirement.